

SPEECH

OF

HON. C. W. CATHCART, OF INDIANA;

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 1848,

On the Bill making Appropriations for the support of the Army.

Mr. CATHCART said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: At this late hour of this remarkably long session, I take the floor, very sensibly impressed with the fact, that there is a manifest impatience felt whenever the peril of the infliction of a speech hangs over us; but time and again have I in vain struggled for the privilege of saying the most of that which I have now to say; and I am unwilling to forego my right of making such remarks as a just understanding of some of the important topics which we have had under consideration may seem to require. Detached and disconnected my remarks must necessarily be. I shall drop "here a line and there a line," leaving it for those who may listen to me to make the proper application.

Suffer me, first, to refer to the discussion upon the civil and diplomatic bill, and allude to the lecture read to us by gentlemen on the other side for our want of patriotism in not voting for their bantling. Great patriotism was claimed by my colleague [Mr. C. B. SMITH] for the Whig party, because they were willing to vote for the bill alluded to, after having shaped it to suit their own views; and bitter were the denunciations thrown upon the Democratic party, because, after you had made various amendments to the bill, (our votes being recorded against them,) we would not turn round and aid you in passing it; and we had the farce enacted, of a Whig majority framing a bill and attaching its most obnoxious features to it by recording their names upon the Journal in their favor, and then unnaturally deserting their own bantling, and suffering the wicked "Locofocos" to strangle it. But when you found that you had carried the joke a little too far, visited, no doubt, with feelings of compunction at your own paritidal course, you turn round and say, "Oh, we only wanted to try you Locofocos, and see if you would stop the wheels of Government by refusing to vote for this bill." We knew you too well to suppose that you would let this bill sink. Why, sir, it contained the necessary appropriations for your own pay. It was not a bill to provide the ways and means to support our brave troops in a foreign land; if it had been, we would have come to the rescue; we knew, while we could not depend on you to vote supplies to our gallant army engaged in a just war, that yet this bill, covering the supplies for this House, was perfectly safe in your hands. Wonderful patriotism, indeed, in my colleague [Mr. C. B. SMITH] to vote for his own rations, when he could refuse, as I shall presently show—when he could vote against purchasing grave-clothes for the gallant dead, or medical aid to the gallant survivors of our brave army! Wonderful patriotism, indeed, which is illustrated in time of peace by voting supplies to the well-fed civil functionaries of the Government, our

precious selves among the number, and yet could have the hardihood in time of war to refuse even straw to the dying soldier to lie upon, the healing balm or cooling draught to his parched lips, or the necessary grave-clothes for his decent interment!

The gentleman from Tennessee, too, [Mr. BARROW,] took us, the Democratic side of the House, roundly to task, for not voting for this Whig omnibus bill, embracing so many items of internal improvement, and every thing, as to render a descriptive title impossible. And he gravely informed the country that one fact would prove conclusively the patriotism of the Whig party, and that was, that no bill whatever *had passed* this House this session without the aid of that party. Curious discovery, and worthy of a political Newton, that in a House where you Whigs have a majority, some of you have voted for every bill which obtained a majority! After this, no one surely can doubt the patriotism of the Whig party.

My colleague entertained the House by sending a very small book to the Chair to be read—(Gen. Cass's letter declining to go to Chicago.) Now, I am free to admit, that this was a *very small* affair, and I do not propose to follow the gentleman's example; but could I believe such puerility in place, small indeed would be the volume which would comprise the tangible evidences of the opinions of the gentleman's candidate for the Presidency, not only upon this, but upon all other questions; and how miserable this effort at ridicule coming from that quarter, whose candidate shuns *all* avowal of political opinion! The most Lilliputian edition of a blank book would contain *all* the known sentiments of General Taylor upon the grave political measures which have divided the parties of this country. And yet my colleague could complain of the brevity of General Cass's letter to a friend, declining an invitation to attend a convention, upon the subject-matter of whose deliberations his opinions and his acts were subject of notoriety.

My colleague and other gentlemen on the other side have seen proper to institute a comparison between Mr. Van Buren and Henry Clay—with what taste I will not pretend to say; but I will say, that I see a very great difference in the men, and in their positions. Mr. Van Buren was made by the Democratic party, while Mr. Clay made the Whig party. Mr. Van Buren failed to come up to the requirements of the Democratic party, and we, who made him, had a right to *unmake* him. Can you say as much for the Whig party? Where has Henry Clay failed you?—he who breathed the breath of life into you? I ask you, where are his shortcomings? Nowhere; and you *know it*—and, knowing it, you cast him off, and seek for your candidate, not a firm, preëminent Whig civilian, not a Whig military chieftain—but a military chieftain, and nothing else. If you had desired the first,

there was Clay; if you wanted the second, there was Scott; but as you wanted the last, you took Taylor. What a lesson to young Whigs, to inculcate political fidelity, may be found in your treatment of Mr. Clay!

After this digression, I shall now go on with the remarks which I desire to submit to the consideration of this committee, my purpose being to vindicate the party with which I am connected from some of the charges which are so vehemently made against us by the other side of the House. While I believe most conscientiously that the gentlemen of the Whig party who voted for the war bill of May, 1846, and who now declare that they voted a lie! are mistaken, and that their party zeal outruns their sense of moral rectitude, yet I shall not, by any elaborate argument, drawn, as it might be, from the history of our Mexican difficulties, attempt the justification of the President, and of the course of the party which elected him and sustained him in the prosecution of this war.

There is another mode by which I prefer to defend the cause of our country and of the party which now, by accident, is in the minority in this House; and this mode is, in showing up some of the positions, contradictory in themselves, which are assumed by the other side of the House. The rectitude of a position may as well be shown by the discrepancy of the various assumptions brought forward by its opponents, as by reasoning, even in the most logical manner, from the premises upon which it is founded; for it may well be argued, that if positions, irreconcilable in themselves, and which would almost imply moral obliquity in those who use them, are brought forward for a common purpose, the object at which they aim is impregnable to the assaults of truth.

I have been amused with the diversity of opinion on the other side as to the cause of this Mexican war, and the dissertations upon the various heads under which gentlemen have prosecuted their inquiries. We have had the *remote* and the *proximate* cause; and some gentlemen, more learned than the rest, have given us the "*casus belli*," and the "*causa causarum*." With *all*, there would have been no war without annexation; with some, "*annexation was war*;" with others, annexation was an innocent thing in itself, and did not necessarily produce war! All of the gentlemen on the other side—even those who say that annexation was war, or that war was a necessary consequence of annexation—concur in denouncing the march of the army to the Rio Grande as unnecessary, unconstitutional, and unjust, and that this movement brought on the war. They present the singular spectacle of admitting themselves wrong, for the sake of proving the President so!

But, sir, to the searcher after truth, causes will be found to have been at work which necessarily tended to bring about a collision between us and the people of Mexico, and which would have done it, even had the Government of the United States closed her doors against the admission of Texas into the Union. Those causes are to be found in the character of the reckless banditti, who assumed to rule the Mexican populace—a sister Republic, as it has been more fondly than wisely termed; rather a den of perfidious, blood-thirsty, military usurpers, having no ennobling trait to boast of, cowering under the frowns of England, and writhing under the lash of France, and only pertinaciously trampling upon our rights because of our known aversion to war, and our character for patience and long-suffering; and sustained, too, in

their insolent course, by the leading presses of a great party among us, which always stand ready to make common cause with any foreign country with whom we have a controversy. Power in Mexico has been almost universally in the hands of mercenary military leaders—(a Republic she has been called!)—a pitiful military despotism, better suited to a comparison with the regency of Algiers than to our form of government. With an army costing her \$8,000,000 per annum, in time of peace, (in 1840,) when her whole civil administration only cost \$4,000,000, or half as much!—what sort of a republic is this?

Prior to the passage of our joint resolutions inviting the annexation, Mexico had recognized the independence of Texas, provided she would not unite herself with any other nation. Of course her objection was to a union with us. Do you believe she was sincere? What says Brantz Mayer, in his work on Mexico? "The lessons of chicanery and corruption taught to its colony by Old Spain—through her injustice and oppression—became a principle of action, and duplicity was raised to 'the rank of a virtue.'" In the armistice which was entered into between Mexico and Texas, one of the terms of which was a recognition of her independence, there were questions enough left open—among the rest, the very question of boundary, about which she would not *even treat* with us—to have furnished her with pretexts for a dozen wars; and who believes that, in the agreement which she entered into with Texas, her object was anything more than to defeat annexation *at that time*? And believing, as we may naturally suppose she did, that the Whig party was coming into power in the United States—which she knew was inimical to annexation, and friendly to her—who believes that this was anything more than one of her characteristic tricks, and that she intended ultimately to assert her claim, by force of arms, to Texas, and to the whole of it? To believe that such was not her intention, would argue that she preferred fighting Texas backed by the power of this Confederacy, to engaging her single-handed—and that she regarded her plighted word: assumptions equally unfounded and untenable. Suppose, then, that the Whig party had come into power in 1844, and had turned a deaf ear to the desire of a kindred people to return to the old family fold, and Mexico had commenced again her ruthless warfare, sending, as she did, at the head of her armies, one of the most cruel of her petty tyrants—a wretch, who could satiate his vengeance by such pitiful and disgusting malignity as the broiling of the heads of his enemies in oil,—think you, sir, that we of the great West would have permitted the reenactment of the scenes of the Goliad and Alamo? Think you, sir, that your great captain, had he been at the head of this Government, could have restrained the bold and ardent population of the West? No, sir, no! We would have scorned and despised the craven spirit which would have tied our hands; and every bold spirit in the great valley would have seized his rifle, use of which he knows so well, and following the course of the waters, upon the banks of which his humble cabin had been reared by his own hard hands, we would have formed a torrent as irresistible as the father of waters himself; and, bursting over the barrier, would have swept the myrmidons of Mexico from the face of God's earth. Talk to our western people about laws of neutrality, when a nation of barbarians, which sets all the laws of nations and of nature's God at defi-

ance, are about cutting the throats of our brethren and their helpless families! Sing psalms to a dead horse, will you?—you had about as well!

The President did wrong, we are told, in ordering the troops to the Rio Grande. The march was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally ordered, and was unjust towards Mexico. What says the Constitution? "The United States shall guaranty to every State in this Union a republican form of government, and shall protect each of them against invasion, and * * * against domestic violence." And again: "He [the President] shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed."

You will here see that the power to repel invasion and to suppress insurrection, are granted to the President by the same clause of the Constitution. And yet, the party which could shout hosannas to Mr. Tyler for using the army of the United States to put down an up-heaving of a portion of our own people, whose object was peacefully to obtain the exercise of a right sacred in the eyes of every freeman, that of participating in the election of their rulers, are ready to consign to perdition Mr. Polk for exercising the power granted by the same clause, to prevent an invasion attempted by the most villanous collection of murderous scoundrels who were ever dignified by the name of a civilized army. So praiseworthy was the interference of Mr. Tyler in the Rhode Island difficulties considered by Mr. Clay, that I think I may say it was the only act in the performance of which the former of those gentlemen was sustained by the latter, after he had refused to play second fiddle to him as the great Whig organ.

Let us see what Mr. Clay says in his celebrated Raleigh speech, delivered in April, 1844:

"There is one prominent and characteristic difference between the two parties which eminently distinguishes them, and which, if there were no other, would be sufficient to decide my judgment, and that is, the respect and deference universally displayed by the one, and the disregard and contempt exhibited by the other, to the Constitution, to the laws, and to public authority. In a country where a free and self government is established, it should be the pleasure, and it is the bounden duty of every citizen to stand by and uphold the Constitution and laws, and support the public authority."

"In an arbitrary and absolute government, the subject may have some excuse for evading the edicts and ukases of the monarch, because they are not only promulgated without consulting his will, but sometimes against the wishes and interests of the people. In that species of government, the power of the bayonet enforces a reluctant obedience to the law. With a free people, the fact that the laws are their laws, ought to supply, in a prompt and voluntary rally to the support of the public authority, a force more peaceful, more powerful, and more reasonable than any derivable from a mercenary soldiery."

"It is far from my intention or desire to do the least injustice to the party to which I am opposed, but I think that in asserting the characteristic difference between the two parties, which I have done, I am fully borne out by facts, to some of which only, on this occasion, can I refer, and these shall all be of a recent nature."

"In intimate connection with this case, the subject of *Dorrism* may be noticed. * * * The Whigs everywhere, I believe, to a man, have disapproved and condemned the movement of *Dorr*. It has been far otherwise with our opponents. * * * You can readily comprehend and feel what would be the effects and consequences of *Dorrism* here at the South, if *Dorrism* were predominant."

What a rebuke is here pronounced upon his own party for their course during this war! Permit me to repeat a portion of this speech:

"With a free people, the fact that the laws are their laws, ought to supply, in a prompt and voluntary rally to the support of the public authority, a force more peaceful, more powerful, and more reasonable than any derivable from a mercenary soldiery."

How have you on the other side of the House complied with this injunction? After voting for the

war bill, preamble and all, you justify yourselves by denouncing the preamble as false, while you declare that the body of the bill was such, that you were so anxious to vote for it, that you were willing to swallow the lie contained in the preamble. Thus the body of the bill was not only—to quote the words of Mr. Clay—your "laws," to be sustained by "a prompt and voluntary rally," but it was doubly so by having had your votes recorded in its favor.

The war bill placed the whole army, navy, volunteers, and militia of the Union at the command of the President; authorizing him to call out volunteers alone to the number of 50,000, to complete all the public armed vessels, to purchase and arm any number of steamboats and merchant vessels, and appropriated \$10,000,000 "to prosecute said war to a speedy and successful termination."

You cannot cover up your real object in voting for this war bill, by saying that your object was to rescue General Taylor—the veil is too thin. I will read from the speech of the gentleman from Massachusetts, now in the chair, [Mr. HUNSON,] delivered on this floor on the 14th of May, 1846, the day following that on which the war bill was signed by the President:

"But he denied that the bill passed the other day was to rescue General Taylor's army from immediate impending peril; and he referred to dates, to the calls upon the Executives of Texas and of Louisiana for volunteers, &c., to show that troops for the relief of the army were about to embark, and that their fate, one way or the other, would have been sealed long before any supplies under the bill of Congress could reach them. It was not, therefore, to supply the army in its exigency that that bill had been passed, but to put at the disposal of the President 50,000 men and \$10,000,000, to prosecute a war and to chastise Mexico."

By saying that the war was unnecessary, unjust, and unconstitutionally begun, and that the preamble, "Whereas, by the act of the Republic of Mexico a state of war exists between that Government and the United States," was untrue, a pretty predicament, religiously, morally, and politically, you place yourselves in!—that of voting a "lie" for the sake of prosecuting an unjust, unnecessary, and unconstitutional war!

You may prefer that position; there is no accounting for taste; but I declare that I would infinitely prefer to be numbered among the fourteen who voted against the bill. I admire and adopt the remark which I find reported in a speech purporting to have been delivered in the Senate by a Whig, [Mr. JOHNSON, of Maryland:—] "The war 'is just, because she (Mexico) commenced it. *It does exist by her act, and so help me God, but for that conviction, as I reverence truth and detest falsehood, I would never have voted for the act of 13th May, 1846.*'"

But it appears, after all, that if the President could only have found where that line was in the "stupendous desert" which divided Texas from Mexico, you of the Whig side of the House would have sustained him in ordering General Taylor to toe that mark. Now, if General Taylor, with all the advantages of the light which the President had, superadded to the fact that he was there and upon the ground, with his scientific officers, &c., could not make this discovery, how can you find so much fault with the President—especially as you have yourselves been reenacting for a year the game of your childhood, "hunt the slipper," and are just as wise as you began? And why? Because the line was not there, but was exactly where General Taylor found it at the Rio Grande. All his despatches, where his locality was defined, as I have told my constituents an

hundred times, were superscribed "*Texas*," until he crossed the *Rio Grande*. The evidence is clear that the east bank of the *Lower Rio Grande* was given up by the armies of Mexico to those of Texas several times by their retreat across it, and sanctioned more than once by stipulation between the contending forces. I will refer to the agreement by which Santa Anna saved the remnants of his army and his life, when he abandoned the country on the east of the *Lower Rio Grande* to the military possession of Texas, and would ask, can evidence be more clear, that he gave up the possession of the country to the *Rio Grande*. And this kind of possession was precisely the same as that by which Texas held the very site upon which her Capitol was built.

Though Texas had laid a claim to the whole country east of the *Rio Grande*, throughout its entire length, yet you find no attempt of our Government to take possession of the *upper* portion of that country until after the commencement of the war; and when our armies marched to that country, you find our officers, in their despatches dated from the east side of the *Rio Grande*, as invariably calling the country "*New Mexico*," as you find General Taylor calling the country between the *Rio Grande* and the *Nueces* (which is a short river) "*Texas*." There is much force in the remark of Mr. Trist to the Mexican commissioners; I only pretend to give its substance: that as Texas claimed to the *Rio Grande*, and Mexico to the *Sabine*, and as the question had been referred, by the compact between Texas and the United States, to the treaty-making power of Mexico and the United States, and as Mexico refused to treat upon the subject, that the Executive of the United States would be exercising an excessive assumption of power in himself defining the boundary between the two countries; and that hence he was compelled to rest the question of boundary where Texas had placed it. This the President felt bound to do; and in practically carrying his views into execution, he selected General Taylor, who was a willing instrument; so willing, indeed, that he not only obeyed the instructions of the President, but went beyond them in enforcing the blockade of the *Rio Grande*. Let us look, for a moment, to the instructions and his acts. In the letter of the Secretary of War to General Taylor of the 13th of January, 1846, he says:

"Should you attempt to exercise the right which the United States have, in common with Mexico, to the free navigation of this river, (*Rio Grande*.) it is probable that Mexico would interpose resistance. You will not attempt to enforce this right without further instructions."

But General Taylor saw proper to enforce not only the common right to the navigation of the *Rio Grande*, but absolutely blockaded it. In his letter of April 23, 1846, General Taylor says:

"On the 17th instant, Lieutenant Renshaw, of the navy, warned off two American schooners, about to enter the river with provisions." * * * "I trust that my course in this matter will meet the approval of the department. It will, at any rate, compel the Mexicans either to withdraw their army from Matamoros, where it cannot be subsisted, or to assume the offensive on this side of the river."

And this very act, according to one of the denouncers of the President, was *war*. So the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. FISHER] emphatically said; and he censured the President for approving the act. General Taylor acted with becoming spirit in this matter, as he has throughout, for which he well deserves, and has received, and will continue to receive, the grateful acknowledgments of his country. I cite but one transaction out of many, to prove that General Taylor was no laggard in

carrying out the orders of his Government—to prove that *his heart was in the job*; and not to attempt, as the gentleman from Georgia, now in my eye, [Mr. STEPHENS,] charged upon this side of the House, to throw the responsibility of the movement to the *Rio Grande* upon the shoulders of the brave old General. In having acted well his part, the General has won laurels enough, without your attempting to rob the Executive of his, by denying him his proper share of the honor of having vindicated, by his direction of the movements of the army, not only the honor of the country, but his own character for prudence and sagacity. But what right has the gentleman from Georgia to constitute himself the especial guardian of the honor of General Taylor? Where was he when the bill was on its passage in this House under which it was proposed, and under which General Taylor was afterwards made major general, the President having before exhausted his power, under the laws in existence, in promoting him? By turning to the Journal, it will be found that he voted *against* the bill. Where was he when the bill entitled "An act making appropriations for the support of the army and of volunteers, for the year ending 30th June, 1848, and for other purposes," was upon its passage, upon that day to which he so often alludes—the day upon which the battle of Buena Vista was fought and won—and in alluding to which he says, "But the presiding genius of our country was there," * * * "guarding the fortunes of her most favorite son?" Let me tell you, sir, after voting for a proviso—a proviso at least as much out of place as the proviso to the resolution of thanks to General Taylor, about which we have heard so much—to the bill which was the first offered, and which declared that no territorial indemnity should be demanded of Mexico, and *which failed*—disgusted, I suppose, he left the House, as I do not find his name again recorded, though the yeas and nays were called three times more upon the bill. And what was the character of some of the provisions of the bill? Let me read from the act (for the purchase of) *the necessary articles for the interment of non-commissioned officers and soldiers*: "For providing for the comfort of discharged soldiers who may be landed at New Orleans, or other places within the United States, so disabled by disease or by wounds received in the service as to be unable to proceed to their homes, and for forwarding destitute soldiers to their homes, five hundred thousand dollars." "Pay of volunteers, under act of 13th May, 1846," being in part the very men who fought this very battle.

And now, let me ask, what thanks has that gentleman to expect from General Taylor, who would not have been in command at Buena Vista, could his wishes have prevailed—having voted against the bill under which General Taylor was given the necessary rank to entitle him to command the army? or what from the brave boys who were in the ranks, when he was not mindful enough of their interests as to lend a helping hand to pass a bill which provided in part for their pay and for their comfort when they returned, sick and wounded, to the shores of their country? And if he was in favor of the bill, it is only by saying that he had more faith in the action of the Democracy of this House, on that day, than he had in his own political friends, that he can justify his absence; for about one-half of his party present voted against the bill, including all three of the gentlemen who were the candidates of his patriotic party for the Speakership at the present session, (Messrs. WINTHROP, VINTON, and C. B.

SMITH.) Where was the great love of these distinguished gentlemen for our brave army, upon that memorable day, when the compact lines of the Mexican army were bearing down in their misplaced confidence, and in the insolence of overwhelming numbers, upon our handful of brave soldiers upon the plains of Buena Vista? Their bowels of compassion were in a desperate congestion—suffering under what we farmers would call the “dry murrain”—voting against “aid and comfort” to the very men upon whose prowess, on that day, they now depend to furnish them with an available candidate for the Presidency! If their votes had prevailed, what would have become of the bodies of the gallant dead who fell at Vera Cruz, at Cerro Gordo, at Molino del Rey, at Chapultepec, at the Garita, and the hundred other places where their deeds have thrown such a halo of glory around the arms of the United States? Left to the charity of their comrades for their winding-sheets, (refused, in the words of the act itself,)—“*the necessary articles for their interment.*” You the especial custodians of the honor of the army, who would leave the bodies of the gallant dead to wither and to perish, debarred of the rights of decent burial, in a foreign land!—the gallant soldier, dying in sustaining the honor of his country; his only pall the raven’s wing; his requiem, the discordant notes of the obscene bird!

I well remember having heard, during the last session of the last Congress, a gentleman on the other side of the House compare the conduct of the opponents of this war to that of the noble spirits in the British Parliament during the war of our Independence, whose generous souls and love of liberty induced them to take part with the oppressed and suffering colonies.

Will it be denied that the Earl of Chatham, the Duke of Grafton, Lord Camden, Mr. Wilkes, and others, gave us “aid and comfort?” And if the comparison is just, as drawn by yourselves, why lash yourselves with an impotent fury while digesting the remarks of the President?

What did Mr. Polk say?

“The war has been represented as unjust and unnecessary, and as one of aggression on our part upon a weak and injured enemy. Such erroneous views, though entertained by but few, have been widely and extensively circulated, not only at home, but have been spread throughout Mexico and the whole world. A more effectual means could not have been devised to encourage the enemy and protract the war than to advocate, and adhere to their cause, and thus give them ‘aid and comfort.’”

Is not every word here uttered true? How else could eighty-five American citizens have given half the aid and comfort to Mexico that you have, in voting in your places, as representatives of the American people, holding the purse-strings of the nation, “that the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States.”

Why, modern science, with all its ingenuity, has failed to invent arms or engines of destruction which, placed in your hands, would have made you as efficient in giving “aid and comfort” to the Mexicans as the mere record of that vote! The fire which burns with an unquenchable blaze, the arrow dipped in the most subtle poison, Colt’s revolver, the Paixhan gun, or even Bragg’s battery, manned by you, and directed against your countrymen in Mexico—all these would have been as trifles compared to the influence of that vote in its tendency to prevent an honorable peace. Was it not natural to suppose that Mexico, seeing you have done so much for her in “the green leaf,”

would hope more from “the dry?” She has always looked upon the Whig party as friendly to her; you said so yourselves; you said, some of you, that you are even willing to give back all her territory to her, and to pay her, besides, for the expenses of the war. Nearly, if not all of you have said you would take none of her territory, and would at once have called home our conquering legions. You have by accident obtained a majority in this House; you spoke confidently of obtaining the whole control of the Government in a short time; and knowing, as we do, how often hope misleads the judgment, can we doubt that Mexico saw in your advent to power the fruition of all her insolent demands; and that she was induced to maintain the war at every sacrifice, expecting that better day when she could treat with a Whig administration?

You would succeed better in obtaining the good opinion of the honest voters of the country, by acknowledging that your motive was to give aid and comfort to Mexico; for if a tithe of what you said was true, of the oppression and injustice with which you charged the Democratic party with treating her, *she ought to have had aid and comfort*; and so far from your being fit subjects of denunciation on that account, you would stand upon a prouder eminence than a Chatham or a Camden, and deserve to have your brows encircled with never-fading laurels. Better, far better had you put in the plea of justification, than to deny the fact.

I have heard many amusing attempts to convict the President of giving the enemy “aid and comfort,” because he ordered the commander of the squadron to suffer Santa Anna to pass into Mexico. Now, setting aside the question whether it was possible to prevent him—which, to say the least, is very problematical, as Paredes, after we had possession of Vera Cruz, not only passed the squadron, but went through the city—let us see if there was not great reason to anticipate that Santa Anna’s return would cripple and disorganize the armies of Mexico. In the first place, we had nothing to lose, at least such was a fair inference.

The manifesto of the army of the reserve at San Luis Potosi, of December 14, 1845, in virtue of which Paredes deposed Herrera, says—

“That it [Herrera’s administration] sought to get rid of a war, necessary and glorious in itself, by concessions injurious to the national dignity;” * * * “that it had repeatedly thwarted the purpose of the army to march upon Texas;” * * * “that it had admitted a Commissioner, with whom it was endeavoring to arrange for the loss of the integrity of the Republic;” * * * “that it had allowed a Plenipotentiary of the United States to set foot in the country and reside in the capital with a view to bargain for the independence and nationality of the country.”

This was followed by the declaration of the officers of the army at Tampico, December 20, 1845, supporting the movement at San Luis Potosi:

They declare that “the Government has given unequivocal proof that it does not wish to make a campaign against Texas, thus opposing itself to the wishes of the nation, and that” * * * “it is treating with the United States for the sale of the territory of Texas.”

Now, this was the party in power; and I would ask if there was any reason to anticipate evil, by admitting Santa Anna, as it was known that he was the enemy of Paredes? Let me show you how the admission of Santa Anna was viewed by some of your own party. I read from the speech of the gentleman from Massachusetts, of the 13th February, 1847, [Mr. Hudson:]

“Mr. Calhoun, as we have already seen in his report recommending the war of 1812, places the sending a British agent here, in time of peace, to foment discontent and to produce disunion, among the greatest insults and grossest outrages of which a nation could be guilty. And yet the

President of the United States virtually confesses that he has been guilty of a similar outrage against a sister Republic. The President informs us that on the 13th of May last, the very day on which war was declared against Mexico, he gave orders to Commodore Conner to let Santa Anna pass through the fleet into Mexico, in the belief that he would produce discord and revolution, which might prove beneficial to us. * * * So that it appears that the President, through his agents, had been plotting with the treacherous Santa Anna to revolutionize a country with which we were at peace—had been guilty of an outrage, such as Mr. Calhoun declared to be a just cause of war."

The President is here accused of "plotting with the treacherous Santa Anna to revolutionize Mexico." Strange aid and comfort, this!

"I regret the absence of my colleague, [Mr. R. W. THOMPSON,] as I desired to call his attention, and that of the committee, to the following paragraph, which I will read from his speech, as published in the National Intelligencer:

"He then proceeded to say that they had been told by gentlemen on this floor that the refusal of the Mexican Government to receive Mr. Slidell justified the movement. There was something exceedingly singular in that part of the history of our country. If he understood it, it was this: Our Government learned, through Mr. Black, our consul, that the Mexican Government would receive, not an envoy extraordinary, but a commissioner. Such a commissioner never was sent; but an envoy extraordinary was sent. That minister was Mr. Slidell, who went to Mexico and presented his credentials. He was not received by the administration of Herrera. The refusal to receive him was communicated to this Government in a letter of the date of the 27th December, which was not received here until the 23d January—ten days after the issuance of the order of the 13th January to General Taylor."

Here it will be perceived, that the gentleman seeks to blame the President for having sent an envoy extraordinary to Mexico, instead of a commissioner; and upon this, predicates a charge of want of sincerity in Mr. Polk's assertion, that he desired to maintain peace. It is not disputed by any that Mexico agreed to receive a commissioner to settle *all* the matters in dispute between us; but because the President sent Mr. Slidell, calling him an envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, with exactly the same powers which he would have had as commissioner, he is charged with purposely seeking a rupture. Now, it has been proved that Herrera's administration admitted that they only caviled about these words, driven by the force of the war feeling among the people, or rather the army, to seek a pretext to refuse accrediting Mr. Slidell. They not only objected to his being a minister instead of a commissioner, but they objected (going behind his commission) that he was not confirmed by the Senate. This last ground of objection, no one will deny, was a mere pretext. I shall not call up the evidence which has been often adduced upon this point, but will only call your attention again to the pronunciamiento of the army which placed Paredes in power, dated December 14, 1845, which complains of Herrera's administration, in one place, "that it had admitted a *commissioner*, with whom it was endeavoring to arrange," &c.; and, in another part of the same pronunciamiento, speaking of the admission of the *same man*, (Mr. Slidell,) you will find the following: "that it had allowed a *plenipotentiary* of the United States to set foot in the country," &c. Let me ask of every honest man, who will read this document, written at the instigation of Paredes, and under which he succeeded in displacing Herrera, whether it does not furnish the clearest testimony that the Mexicans viewed the distinction between commissioner and plenipotentiary as being immaterial in point of fact? Indeed, here they are used as synonymous terms in a grave state paper. Can evidence be

clearer that, in their diplomacy, the distinction was drawn to cover up their violated faith, in refusing to accredit our minister of peace after having agreed to receive him? I think my colleague will find the Yankees at least as shrewd as the Mexican army was in detecting that this diplomatic ruse of the Mexican minister, and of the Whig party here, was founded on "a distinction without a difference."

My colleague [Mr. THOMPSON] denounced the President's declarations that he was desirous to maintain peace with Mexico, as insincere; and boldly charged him with having ordered the advance of General Taylor on the 13th January, 1846, when he had good reason to believe that our minister, Mr. Slidell, would be received and accredited by the Mexican Government; and dwelt with particular emphasis, and much seeming delight upon his conviction of the President of this basest of all crimes—an attempt to deceive the American people into the support of an unjust war. And what was the evidence which he adduced? I read from his speech again: "The refusal to receive him (Mr. Slidell) was communicated to this Government in a letter of the date of '27th December, and was not received here until 'the 23d January—ten days after the issuance of 'the order of the 13th January to General Taylor.'" What are the facts? The gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. RUETT] called the attention of my colleague [Mr. THOMPSON] to the following, being a postscript to a letter of Mr. Slidell:

"P. S. December 18, 1845. At the moment I am about to close this, I obtained the dictamen of the Council of Government, published in the 'Siglo.' I send you the paper."

Now, this "Siglo" was a Mexican newspaper, and the "dictamen" published in it was the determination of the Council not to accredit Mr. Slidell; and thus furnished the strongest evidence of the hopelessness of his being accredited. If my colleague had been as partial to the perusal of Mexican papers as our soldiers in Mexico say the people there are to his and other Whig speeches, he would not have committed this blunder. But there was no occasion to have dipped into the Castilian to have known the purport of the article in the "Siglo."

If my colleague had not been in such hot haste to convict the President, he would have found published in the same document which contained the allusion to the "Siglo," the letter from the Mexican minister (dated December 11, 1845) to the Council, wherein the Council is called upon to sustain him in rejecting Mr. Slidell; and which letter drew from the Council the dictamen which was published in the "Siglo" newspaper. And thus vanishes into thin air the foundation for the grave charge against Mr. Polk.

I will briefly allude to one other matter of complaint which is brought forward by my colleague: that the officer in command at the city of Mexico had licensed several gaming-houses. He calls it "a monopoly." I may infer from that, that he goes for free trade, at least as far as dice and cards are concerned: or am I to understand that the Mexican laws and customs should have been abolished? Now, if they had been abolished, the same cry of usurpation, of unconstitutional power, would have been heard as was raised when a civil code was proposed in California and New Mexico. Frame a new code for any portion of Mexico, and we are charged with trampling upon the Constitution. Let the old laws of Mexico stand, and we are charged with corrupting their

morals! The truth is, my friends, (on the other side of the House,) you are so hard to please that you are hardly worth pleasing! The Mexican laws authorized these gaming-houses, and all that our officers did, was to assume the use of the license money for our brave troops, instead of suffering it to go to sustain the cut-throat guerrillas of Mexico.

I have before said, that in the movement to the Rio Grande, General Taylor was no laggard, and that his heart was in the job; and in this connection, let me call the attention of the gentleman from Virginia, whom I see in his seat, [Mr. GOGGIN,] and of the committee, to a brief extract from his speech. I read from the Congressional Globe, page 279: "It was said that General Taylor advised the march to the Rio Grande." And then, as evidence to *disprove this assertion*, the gentleman read certain extracts from the letters of General Taylor, which I will also quote from his speech:

"General Taylor wrote, under date of August 15th, 1845: 'Nor do I fear that the reported concentration of troops at Matamoros is for any purpose of invasion.' He (Mr. G.) read extracts from other letters of General Taylor, all announcing that everything was quiet at the Rio Grande, and ascribing the rumors and 'exaggerated accounts of Mexican preparations to resist our advance, if not indeed to attempt an invasion of Texas' 'to personal interests connected with the stay of the army here,' and expressing a hope 'that they will receive no attention at the War Department.' This was the language (said Mr. G.) of a patriot, * * * who would not involve his country in a war for the sake of any laurels which he might thereby heap on his own brow."

In this flattering view of Old Rough and Ready, notwithstanding his injustice to the Indiana volunteers, I concur most heartily, for we have every evidence that General Taylor did not look upon his advance as being calculated to precipitate a war. But for what were these quotations made from the General's correspondence? They were made by the gentleman from Virginia to prove that General Taylor's advice was *in opposition* to a forward movement to the Rio Grande; and any one reading the quotations and the context in his speech is led irresistibly to the belief that such was the intention of the gentleman. Furthermore, from the particular emphasis laid by the gentleman from Virginia upon the extract from General Taylor's letter, where he expresses the hope "*that they will receive no attention at the War Department*"—alluding to the rumors before mentioned—the presumption is strong, that he was of the opinion that those rumors were of a character to induce a forward movement, and that General Taylor, in expressing the hope "that they will receive no attention at the War Department," evinced an opinion hostile to the advance, notwithstanding he (General T.) attributed them "*to personal interests connected with the stay of the army here*," meaning, of course, Corpus Christi. These very letters of General Taylor prove the very opposite of the deductions of the gentleman from Virginia.

What are the facts set forth in this very letter from which these extracts are made? The letter is dated one month and three days after the date of the order from the Secretary of War, instructing General Taylor to advance to the Rio Grande. I will now read from the letter, and I will be careful to give such portions as will *honestly* show the intention of the writer:

"I have informed (says General Taylor) the Commodore that I am about to move to the Rio Grande." * * * "We shall be able to commence the movement about the first of March." "Many reports will doubtless reach the department, giving exaggerated accounts of Mexican preparations to resist our advance, if not, indeed, to attempt an invasion of Texas. Such reports have been circulated even at this place, and owe their origin to personal interests connected with the stay of the army here. I trust they will receive no attention at the War Department. From the best information

I am able to obtain, and which I deem as authentic as any, I do not believe our advance to the banks of the Rio Grande will be resisted. The army, however, will go fully prepared for a state of hostilities, should they unfortunately be provoked by the Mexicans."

Every right-minded man *must* see that the inference which the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. GOGGIN] has drawn from this letter, is not only unsustained by it, but is in direct conflict with its letter and its spirit.

So far from being unwilling to advance, General Taylor, apprehensive that the rumors of the collection of a large force on the Rio Grande might cause uneasiness at the War Department, and, perhaps I may add, cause a countermand of the order to advance, takes the most effectual means to quiet any fears of the safety of the army, by saying, "such reports have been circulated even at this place, and owe their origin to *personal interests connected with the stay of the army here*." Now, what is the plain meaning of this? Is it not that the people of Corpus Christi, enamored with the glorious pickings, or, in other words, the peculiar advantages resulting to their "personal interests" from the establishment of a great military encampment near their town, were so anxious for "the stay of the army" there, that they were circulating reports having for their object the prevention of the advance of the army; and hence General Taylor says: "*I trust they will receive no attention at the War Department.*"

This is the letter which is brought forward for the condemnation of the President by the other side of the House; and yet this very letter, so far as the opinion of General Taylor can—and I admit it is entitled to very great weight—sustains the President in all those movements near the Rio Grande which are condemned as the immediate cause of this "miserable war," as it is called, which, by the by, has had the effect of making every patriotic American citizen so proud of his country, and has taught the envious monarchies of Europe "to stand from under."

The letter proves that General Taylor did not consider his march to the Rio Grande an act of hostility to Mexico; and he must have considered it so, if he believed that the country between the Rio Grande and the Nueces was Mexican territory; or else you, of the Whig party, must consider him as ignorant of international law as, to quote the remark of the gentleman from Mississippi, (Gov. BROWN,) you seem to consider him of geography, in calling this country Texas, when you say it is Mexico. The words of the letter are: "The army, however, will go fully prepared for a state of hostilities, should they unfortunately be provoked by the Mexicans."

Let me now call your attention to a brief extract from General Taylor's letter to General Ampudia, dated "Camp near Matamoros, Texas, April 12, 1846:" "I regret the alternative which you offer, 'but at the same time wish it understood that I shall by no means avoid such alternative, leaving the responsibility with those who *rashly commence hostilities*.'"

In his letter to our Adjutant General, from the same place, General Taylor, (April 26, 1846,) after mentioning the attack made upon Captain Thornton and company, says: "Hostilities may now be considered as commenced."

Your own witness convicts you—I will not say of mendacity, as the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. STEPHENS] said of the President—but of a most unfortunate perversion of facts, and blundering attempts at conclusions totally unwarranted by his testimony.

Mr. Chairman, when I saw the proceedings of the Taylor meeting in the city of New York, in which an issue is attempted to be made by *Whig* leaders upon the ground alone of "availability," while the consideration of *Whig measures* is eschewed as involving *no principle*; and when I also saw in the paper which publishes the proceedings of that meeting (the *Courier and Enquirer*) a letter in which the following remarkable passage appears: "Whether to put up a man who has been run so often as Clay has, and whose circumstances are those of Clay, would not be very hazardous to the integrity of the whole Whig party?—I, sir, am of that opinion,"—I must admit I was struck with profound surprise.

After placing myself in a proper position, by saying that I have, from the commencement of my political career, opposed the measures of the Whig party, and have, with all my power, opposed Mr. Clay's aspirations to the Presidency—my zeal sharpened by his uncompromising hostility to the best interests of the settlers upon the frontier, among whom my lot was cast; and after saying, that should he be again, as he may be yet, a candidate for the Presidency, as I have done I expect to do again, or, in other words, give him the same energetic, bold, but I trust I may say frank opposition,—I trust, after saying all this, that I will not be accused of affecting, in what I shall say, any solicitude in his behalf.

But a Whig says that the nomination of Henry Clay "would be very hazardous to the integrity of the Whig party;" and the Whig party have endorsed it. Well may he exclaim, "God save me from my friends!" I have always thought and said, that you were a party of expedients; that your principles consisted in what you deemed necessary to secure the loaves and fishes. But I never expected to live to see the declaration made by a *Whig*, and to see you acting upon it, "that the nomination of Henry Clay was hazardous to the integrity of the Whig party." But here it is, in the paper of Colonel Webb, the very godfather of your party—the man who, calling you from every quarter of the country to the baptismal font, gave you a name, and that name was Whig! But if you have worn threadbare the time-honored name, and it will no longer hide your nakedness, who so proper as the old high-priest to give you a second sprinkling of the waters, to transfer your allegiance, and to call you by another name—the Taylor party?

But the nomination of *Henry Clay* was hazardous to the integrity of the Whig party! The object of almost idolatrous worship—the man whose beck and nod has been received by his party with almost the deference due to a command from Heaven—he who not only breathed the breath of life into your inanimate nostrils, but who alone, of all men, has been able, by the magic of his voice, the example of his indomitable energy, to instil and new vigor into your often broken and dispirited ranks,—Henry Clay, the embodiment of Whig principles—his nomination is declared by a Whig to be "hazardous to the integrity of the Whig party!" And you have acted upon that presumption! Well, truly we have fallen upon strange times! Think you, sir, that the people will not inquire into this movement? Think you, sir, that a party which repudiates all its old issues—bank, tariff, and everything else, and takes for its battle-cry the mere denunciation of the Democratic party on account of the Mexican war, while it takes a general fresh from the battle-field, who, in the words of the gentleman from Maryland, [Mr. ROMAN, Whig]

"is shaking his gory locks at us," as its leader, can hope for the confidence of the people? Such a party may call "spirits from the vasty deep," but the more they call, the more they won't come!

The very end and object of the war, for which the present Administration was contending—*territorial indemnity* and a treaty of peace—is approved and endorsed by General Taylor in his Gaines letter, as I shall presently show; and yet you Whigs, with easy virtue, giving up all your old principles, and raving like bedlam against the Democracy for sustaining these measures, attempt to seize for your candidate a general, who not only endorses the measures you condemn, but whose locks have become "gory" in fighting for it.

In the Gaines letter, General Taylor says:

"I am decidedly opposed to carrying the war beyond Saltillo in this direction." * * * "I shall lose no time in taking possession of the former"—meaning Saltillo.

Again, General Taylor says:

"I do not intend to carry on my operations (as previously stated) beyond Saltillo, deeming it next to impracticable to do so. It then becomes a question as to what is best to be done. It seems to me that the most judicious course on our part would be, to take possession of the line we would accept by negotiation, extending from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific, and occupying the same, or keep what we already have possession of, and that, with Tampico, (which I hope to take in the course of next month, or as soon as I can get the means of transportation,) will give us all this side the Sierra Madre, and, as soon as I occupy Saltillo, will include six or seven States or Provinces—thus holding Tampico, Victoria, Monterey, Saltillo, Monclovia, Chihuahua, (which I presume General Wool has possession of by this time,) Santa Fé, and the Californias—and say to Mexico, 'Drive us from the country.'"

A precious banner you throw to the breeze, with a declaration on *one side* that the war is unjust and unconstitutional; and that you are opposed to all territorial indemnity; and on the other, as your candidate to carry these great principles into effect, the name of the brave General whose locks are clotted with gore, (to use the expression of one of your own men,) reeking and warm from the battle-field, where he has been slaying his thousands of your innocent Mexicans, (for if the guilt is as you say, they must be innocent,) and whose opinion as to the measure of territorial indemnity *only* embraces a region outmeasuring the original thirteen States of this Confederacy, and a boundary extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific—lopping off from Mexico not less than half of her territorial possessions—and going far beyond the treaty line!

With your "no-territory" doctrine for the North-east, that land which has always opposed the extension of the area of freedom; with your candidate in the brave old General who has fought for and won so large a portion of the fair realms which he says we should hold, for the West and South,—you flatter yourselves that you can easily dupe a grateful people.

Talk about putting the man at the head of your party, of whom you were so jealous but two brief years ago, that you would refuse him a commission as major general, and who was placed in a position to make himself "available," in spite of your determined hostility,—why, the idea is preposterous; and, after denouncing the war in which he won his laurels, attempt to *creep beneath their shade*, and thus obtain office "under false pretences," argues that you feel that your end is nigh, and that desperate diseases require desperate remedies; and that with you the "integrity of your party is secondary to your greediness for office." Truly "those whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad;" for the nomination of General Taylor has sounded the death knell of the *modern Whig party*.